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MEMORIAL

OF

HERMAN TEN EYCK FOSTER.

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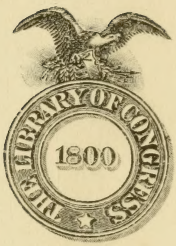

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MEMORIAL

OF

HERMAN TEN EYCK FOSTER.

PREPARED BY

HON. A. B. CONGER,

Ex-President of the New York State Agricultural Society.

PRESENTED AT THE ANNUAL MEETING

FEBRUARY 9, 1870,

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NEW YORK STATE AGRICULTURAL SOCIETY,
In Executive Committee, Feb. 10, 1869.

On motion of Mr. WING:

Whereas, This Committee has received this morning the painful intelligence of the death of our beloved and respected associate, HERMAN TEN EYCK FOSTER,

Resolved, That a committee be appointed to prepare a suitable Minute, in memorial of the worth and services of Mr. FOSTER, to be presented to the Executive Committee and the Society, and entered upon the records

MEMORIAL

OF

HERMAN TEN EYCK FOSTER.

Our Society deplores the loss of one, who for many years honored its confidence in varied official service. The social circle in which he moved, mourns a most generous and dearly esteemed friend, and the benevolent world an ardent and successful fellow-laborer.

Herman Ten Eyck Foster died on the ninth day of February, 1869. His death was a surprise, even to those who witnessed it; without preparation to all, save himself.

An accident early on the morning of the 27th of January, which resulted in a fracture below the left knee, remanded him to his couch. The injury was not deemed serious; every symptom promised early convalescence. While his family were rejoicing in the indications of a complete restoration to

useful and wonted labor, and as one of his children was reading from a recent publication, some witty thought produced a general merriment. His hearty laugh was quickly arrested by a sense of faintness. The reading ceased at his request, and his head was laid on the pillow. Consciousness was quite suspended, and as it returned he said to a daughter ministering to his relief, "I was almost gone."—Instantly the blood surged over his riven heart; the cord which bound him in time was severed; and his spirit released from earth, ascended to its eternal abode.

He was born in the city of New York, on the 1st of March, 1822, the third son of Andrew Foster, a merchant of Scotch birth, and Anna Ten Eyck, an Albanian of Holland lineage.

At the age of fifteen he entered Columbia College, and in due course received his degree as Bachelor of Arts. Spending a winter in the trial of mercantile life, his tastes, and perhaps also a regard to his health, prompted him to the study of farming, which he pursued for a year at Jacksonville, Tompkins Co., under the supervision of Mr. Aaron K. Owen.

His choice of a pursuit in life was soon and wisely determined, and Lakeland, an estate of nearly 250

acres on the east shore of Seneca Lake, was purchased in June, 1843.

Two summers had passed, and when the landscape was clothed in the gorgeous tints of October, he brought to his house, to make it their home, Pauline, a daughter of Mr. Antoine Lentilhon, a French resident of New York City. Four and a half years passed, and a son and two daughters were born, the jewels which the mother wore to the delight of the doting husband and loving father. Then suddenly she was called to a higher home, of which that on earth was, in the ministries and grace of love, the type.

What was the weight of that affliction on his heart, it is not ours to reveal. We note only its traces in his life. The main current of his earthly affection, thus severed, was soon observed to join itself to its tributaries, and swelled his affection and care for his bereaved children. From the tutelage of grief he passed to an inward culture, which gave him hope in his patient waiting for a blessed reunion, took from death its accustomed horror, and led him to express a boding joy in the day of his release. Not that such expressions were frequent, but rather elicited at times of rarest confidence, or brought out in sympathy for some similar trial.

Only was it possible for the nicest observer, and that on few occasions, to read in the depths of his fixed eye, the traces of that deeply felt and long borne sorrow; to understand how inwoven with his placid smile and almost gay urbanity, was that weird, yet staunch earnestness of feeling, which gave to his convictions of duty their true inspiration.

His near neighbors best attest his love for the highest good of their families, as they point to the Sabbath School which he originated, and sustained for nearly nineteen years. His assistants in his work, and his scholars, will not soon forget his labor of love in the prayer meeting on the eve of preparation, which, though recently established, evinced his intense yearning over their religious welfare. Nor will those who shared his nearer confidence fail to be animated by the example of fortitude, which kept him tied to his work even in periods of exhaustion, or of that enthusiasm which, in the deep interest of his work, was oblivious of fatigue.

The sentiments of respect manifested in the last tribute to his remains, the irrepressible emotion, the quiet utterances which spoke his loss and his worth, are the enduring evidence that his genial nature, expressing itself in words and works of kind-

ness and just regard for the welfare of all of human mould, had fully wrought out its mission, and that in his life's journey, he has left

"Footprints in the sands of time,

"Footprints that perhaps another,
Sailing o'er life's solemn main,
A forlorn and shipwrecked brother,
Seeing shall take heart again."

For such a spirit, farming was not simply a business or the occupation of time. It was communion with Nature in her marvelous work, not merely a matter of study or inquisitive search into her hidden mysteries; it was a love for her display in the leafy garniture of her forests, in the heaving bosom of her lakes, in the rippling courses of her rivulets, in the rounding of her hill sides, in the craggy summits of her mountains, not less than in her verdant meadows, or her ripening grain. Hence his pursuit after her rewards in the labors of the field, or the handiwork of the garden, was ever fresh and joyous. It was less of a task than a pastime. Happiness and hope were, as they should be, its moving forces. The methods, however, were those which experience and science had approved, whether in the wise adjustment of means to ends, in the provident adaptation of every work to its season,

or in the plans and purpose of a steady progress. The proof is in the result. Without any lavish expenditure; without fretting out or vexing his noble nature on unforeseen contingencies or petty mishaps; with every enjoyment of life, in the rearing of his children, in unbounded hospitality to his friends; with time freely spent in works of benevolence, and not a little spared to his official duty in advancing the cause of Agriculture—his farm had, under his wise and happy management, more then trebled its original power of production and quadrupled its value.

We note as commendatory evidence of his success in the management of Lakeland, that, as early as 1848, he received at the hands of our State and of his County Society, the first of the several prizes offered for farms systematically and profitably cultivated.

To those who had not with him looked over his convenient shelters for stock, produce and implements, the plan of his buildings as given in the Transactions of our Society for that year, would be ample proof of his love of order, and skill in arrangement.

But if any should seek for a higher test of his success as a farmer, the secret is disclosed in his untiring industry, in his working, where need was,

with his own hands, and always where the labor was severe and ingenuity was required in its application, and in thus being the leader and instructor of his farm laborers.

If we may be permitted to dwell on this phase of his character, we will add that he never did anything "by halves;" and in the fact that he ever in his private and official as well as in his farming life, carried out to the end whatever he undertook, we find confirmation of the wonderful simplicity and force of his mind. His directness and singleness of purpose were as manifest, as if he had based his life solely on the precept, (not more wisely on the oracles from which it was taken.)

> "To thine own self be true,
> And it must follow, as the day the night,
> Thou canst not then be false to any man."

Yes, so free was he from all that was covert in design, from all that savored of guile and suspicion, that it was hard for him to believe that these pests of our nature could lodge and fructify in human hearts, or to understand why they were not instantly eradicated by wholesome culture.

When we approach Mr. Foster's official relations to our Society, words fail us. They are lost in the emotions which his removal, from our pleasant circle of unsought honor and proffered labor, excite afresh.

We have lost a companion in the work we render and the sacrifices we make, towards the elevation of Agriculture, to the rank of an accepted science and honorable profession. Many of us have parted with a very dear and intimate personal friend, with whom in the many problems of life we took sweet counsel. We prize the memory of his promptness, frankness and courtesy in counsel and action; his readiness to redress or smooth a grievance, felt in reality or imagination, as sometimes happens in the contests for the awards and testimonials of our Society; above all, that sincere manifestation of interest in its welfare, that uniform devotion to its continued prosperity, that instinct of honour which spurned the most specious wrong and championed the feeblest right.

We surrender to the members of the Society the task which they can best perform, the embalming of his memory in their hearts. Our work of tracing, in outline, this memorial of his life and character is submitted, in the consciousness that the life tints will be added by many loving hearts, and with no little misgiving that, as his merits have been poorly scanned, his place will be tardily filled.

In an age in which vast fortunes seem to be gained by the throw of a die; when most of our

youth, spurning the trodden paths of labor, are seen dangling after the car of Fortune; when the farm is thrown up and the old homestead forsaken, and its inmates covet village lots, and its young men leave the plough for the counter; when, under an unprecedented demand on the fruits of labor and the products of industry to support our credit as a government and people, production in agriculture is lessened and consumption in the luxuries as well as necessaries of life increased; who are they, born in cities, lapped from infancy in ease and affluence, who will cast behind them all clogs on noble inspiration, tear themselves from luxury and the blandishments of frivolity and folly, resolve to stem the tide which is hurrying our country to bankruptcy and ruin, and devoting their energies to an increased production from deserted or impoverished farms, gladly spend their lives in the study and in the workshop of Nature? On whom of such shall fall the mantle of our departed friend?

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